

Making a Sex Ed Learning Community

Grades 9-12, Lesson 1

Student Learning Objectives

The student will be able to ...

1. list and explain at least four of the ground rules for the *FLASH* unit.
2. contribute to a serious and respectful class environment.
3. identify three topics of interest to be covered in the unit and prepare to research one of those topics.

Agenda

1. Explain the purpose of the lesson and introduce the *FLASH* unit.
2. Use a case study to establish the need for ground rules and then set expectations for the *FLASH* unit.
3. Discuss slang vs. medical language.
4. Review syllabus.
5. Conduct journaling activity.
6. Introduce the anonymous question envelope or box and have students practice using it.
7. Introduce and assign individual research projects.
8. Introduce *FLASH* homework.

This lesson was most recently edited on February 1, 2011.

Materials Needed

Student Materials

- Blank notebook paper for journaling activity & research paper sign up
- **Research Project Instructions Handout** (one per student)
- **To Parents and Guardians: Introducing FLASH Family Homework** (one per student)

OPTIONAL: **Family Homework** packets for each student (Some teachers prefer to hand out an assignment with each lesson. Others prefer to hand them out all at once at the beginning of the unit.) Whole packets, including the letter above and all 13 *Family Homework* assignments, are available online in English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic. Go to www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH, click on "Parents & Guardians."

Classroom Materials

- An envelope (or envelopes) for the anonymous questions (see page 9 of this lesson)
- Small pieces of scrap paper for the anonymous questions
- **Research Project Assignment Sheets** (two to three sets per class)

Teacher Preparation

Well in advance ...

- Read the **Important Reading for Teachers** section of this binder (or online).

The day before the lesson ...

- Prepare envelope(s) & scrap paper for anonymous questions for each class
- Make copies of materials needed, listed above.

Standards

National Health Education Standard:

- **Standard 3:** Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information, products, and services to enhance health.

Performance Indicator 3.12.1: Evaluate the validity of health information, products, and services.

Performance Indicator 3.12.2: Use resources from home, school, and community that provide valid health information.

Washington State Health Education Standard:

- **Essential Academic Learning Requirement (EALR) 2:** The student analyzes and evaluates the impact of real-life influences on health.

Component 3.2: Evaluates health and fitness information.

Grade Level Expectations (GLE) 3.2.1: Evaluates health and fitness information, products, and services.

Rationale

It is sometimes tempting for teachers to skip the Making a Sex Ed Learning Community Lesson due to time constraints with the **FLASH** unit or prior rapport you feel you've built. However, Public Health – Seattle & King County, the publisher of **FLASH**, strongly recommends beginning the **FLASH** unit with this lesson.

This lesson sets the classroom climate for the sexual health unit and builds additional safety. Even though a climate of mutual respect has hopefully already been growing during the year, this unit can be particularly stressful for students, even invoking fear of harassment if it isn't launched sensitively. The Making a Sex Ed Learning Community Lesson sets up the sexual health unit in a way that makes all students in the room feel recognized, welcome, and respected. Through revisiting your classes' ground rules, and giving sexual health related examples of how they might be inadvertently violated and why that's unfair, you will create safety and vastly increase the chances students can actually be present and learn. These ground rules and your matter-of-fact tone can help to alleviate students' fears about what to expect both from you and from each other during the unit. The lesson also sets a tone of academic rigor, similar to all other academic units, thereby normalizing the topic of sexual health education and setting high expectations for learning.

Please use the lesson; you may be surprised at the difference it makes for the rest of the unit.

Activities

NOTE: Instructions to you are in regular font. A suggested script is in *italics*. Feel free to modify the script to your style and your students' needs.

1. Explain the purpose of the lesson and introduce the *FLASH* unit.

*Today we are beginning the **FLASH** unit, which stands for Family Life And Sexual Health. This unit will focus on sexual health, safety and well being. Over the next four weeks (this will vary depending on how you set up your unit), we will cover topics such as healthy relationships, abstinence, pregnancy, birth control ... and a whole lot more. I'm really excited about this unit. You'll get to learn more about your bodies and about sex and gender, and you'll get better at making decisions that keep you safe and healthy.*

I want to tell you a story about a class a couple of years ago that was doing their sexual health unit. Unfortunately, it didn't go very well. Then I'd like for us to figure out how our class can learn from what happened to them and do things differently.

2. Set ground rules / classroom expectations for the *FLASH* unit.

Read the following case study aloud:

CASE STUDY

A couple of years ago there was a sexual health education class that really bombed. On the very first day, they were talking about flirting and "being hit on". A student who I'll call "Rob" announced that he already knew how to handle someone hitting on him.

He said, "Girls don't hit on guys unless they're sluts, so they deserve what they get. And if a guy ever tried anything, I'd punch him out. The idea of someone being gay makes me sick."

After class, two people came up to the teacher and asked to be excused for the rest of the unit. They each sat down in private and had long talks with the teacher.

It turned out that one student (I'll call her "Ming") had been raped by her ex-boyfriend. She felt as if Rob was blaming her ... saying that it was her own fault for being raped. Of course it's never somebody's fault for being raped, and it's easy to feel that way when it's you. Ming couldn't stand to be in class with Rob after his comment. Also, calling people names or putting people down, like Rob did, freaked her out.

Similarly, the second student (I'll call him "Juan") was furious at Rob's violent outburst at the idea of a man hitting another man. Juan's father is gay and he refused to be in a class where people were putting down and making threatening comments about gay people.

Ask the class what could have been done differently in this case study. How would they respond to Rob if they were the teacher?

Give “Rob” the benefit of the doubt in order to invite those who have bullied to want to be more a part of the community you are creating:

In fairness, you have to understand that Rob had no idea that Ming had recently been raped or that Juan’s father was gay. It never occurred to him that anyone would be hurt or offended by his remarks. Rob needed a little education. He needed to learn that there are ways to express his opinion without demeaning other people. He also needed to realize that he never knows the life experiences of most of the people around him. Of course, Ming and Juan have every right to excuse themselves from the classroom if they need to, but the incident should never have happened in the first place.

Own your responsibility for making the classroom safe:

*The teacher in that class felt awful for what happened and felt responsible for the crisis. I want to prevent anything like that from happening in our classroom. Instead, I would like for us to come up with some ground rules or classroom expectations together that will help everyone feel safe about asking questions and expressing opinions. I also know that some of you may feel comfortable with the topics we’re going to cover in our **FLASH** unit. Other folks might feel anxious. I would like us to figure out some ground rules to help alleviate any anxiety, and so that you all know what to expect from me and from each other during this unit.*

Ask the students to come up with a list of classroom expectations that the entire class can agree to for the rest of the **FLASH** unit. Possibilities might include:

- No put-downs.
- It is OK to agree or disagree.
- Begin statements of opinion with, “I believe...”
- It’s OK to keep your opinions and experiences private.
- Listen and be respectful of other people’s opinions.
- Get the facts; any question is OK.
- Protect people’s confidentiality. Don’t share private information publicly, or, if you do, skip the names. You are entitled to protect your own privacy, too.
- Talk to the teacher in private, if you need to.

Write these ground rules up on chart paper or some other paper to keep displayed throughout the **FLASH** unit.

After the students come up with a list of ground rules, if there are any missing that you would like to add, ask the students’ permission to add them to the list. In an effort to get students’ buy-in for these group agreements, you can do one of two things.

- a) Ask the students to raise their hands if they agree. Make sure that all students raise their hands and agree to these ground rules. If there is not agreement, have a conversation regarding this.

- b) Have all of the students initial the group agreements after they are created and written up. Any time a new student starts the class during the unit, have them review the ground rules and also initial the agreements.

This way, when students are not acting in accordance to the group agreements, you can refer back to the fact that they agreed to these in the beginning of the unit.

Also, remind students that you have the right to privacy just as they do. You won't be asking them personal questions around their sexual health, and, in turn, you won't answer questions that feel too personal regarding these topics.

Mention that, if there are very personal concerns someone wants to discuss with you, you will be available to talk in private. You can then refer them to the appropriate professional or resource. Tell them when and how they can set up a meeting with you, and let them know that they will be learning about resources throughout this unit and through individual research projects.

NOTE about CONFIDENTIALITY: Let students know that you want them to come to you. Also remind them that you are a mandatory reporter. This means that you are required to report physical or sexual abuse, neglect, imminent risk of serious harm, or when a student is suicidal or homicidal. Tell students that you are not sharing this with them to discourage them from talking to you and that otherwise you will be scrupulous about protecting their confidentiality. You just want them to know your legal responsibility as a teacher.

3. Discuss slang vs. medical language.

Discuss slang vs. medical language. Explain to students that you encourage them to ask any questions that they want during the unit. Let them know that you expect that they'll use the medically accurate terminology (or "standard adult terms") as opposed to slang.

However, make sure they realize that if the only word that they know for something is slang, it's OK to use the slang, and you'll teach them the medically accurate terminology. It is better to ask a question using slang than not ask the question at all.

Except for offensive words, we are not calling slang terms "inappropriate." Slang words are often just the common word ("have a period" vs "menstruate" or "come" vs "have an orgasm"). For more guidance about handling slang, see page 22 in the "Important Reading for Teachers" section of your **FLASH** binder or at: www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH.

4. Review syllabus.

Provide a syllabus, on paper if possible, so students can take it home and share with their families. It should include the agenda and your expectations. Go through the syllabus with the students to introduce the lessons.

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

AGENDA:

April 5 ... Day 1, Making a Sex Ed Learning Community Lesson
April 6 ... Day 2, Reproductive System Lesson
April 7 ... Day 3, Pregnancy Lesson
Etc.

EXPECTATIONS:

Class participation / following ground rules = up to 5 pts. per day
Family homework assignments = 20 pts. each *
Individual homework assignments = up to 20 pts. each *
Research Project reports = up to 100 pts.
Late assignments ... 10% less per day

* When Family *and* Individual Homework is assigned, you are expected to do one *or* the other, *not* both. You can, of course, do both for extra credit. Homework assignments (family *or* individual ones) should generally take about 10 minutes.

Check in to see if there are any questions about the syllabus or expectations.

5. Conduct journaling activity.

Have the students do a journaling activity on a piece of notebook paper. Explain to the students that they will be handing this writing activity in so you want them to take it seriously. Using the syllabus in front of them, ask the students to write a few sentences answering each of the following two questions:

- a) Which topic do you think that you know the most about? List three facts that you know regarding that topic already.
- b) What are you most excited to learn about in the upcoming unit? Why?

After they have completed the journaling activity, have them hold on to their papers until the end of the class because they will be using them again.

6. Introduce the anonymous question envelope or box and have students practice using it.

Below you will find two options provided for the anonymous question envelope or box. The first option is to use one envelope per class period. The second option is to use one envelope *per topic* per class period. It's up to you whether to use one envelope per class or one envelope per topic.

Option 1: One anonymous question envelope or box per class

You will have prepared, in advance, one large manila envelope (or box) for anonymous questions. It is recommended that you have a different envelope for each class period that

you are teaching. For example, if you are teaching 4 health classes, you would have one labeled envelope per class period, changing them out for each class.

Show the class the envelope and give each student several small pieces of scrap paper. Ask students to write at least one question and drop it in the appropriate envelope. Explain that they should not write their names on the slip, unless they would prefer to talk with you privately about their question. Remind students to use medical terminology to the best of their abilities.



Explain that you will answer the questions at the end of the unit; that's what Lesson 15 is for. If you would prefer to answer questions throughout the unit based on the topic, you can also sort the questions accordingly. Let students know that you encourage them to add questions as they think of them in the days to come. Allow about five minutes for the writing of questions. To assist the students with writing questions, walk them through some sentence stems that they can use to help them in writing questions. Write these on the board as you say them aloud:

- "Is it true that ...?"*
- "How do you know if ...?"*
- "What causes ...?"*
- "What do they mean by ...?"*
- "Should you worry if ...?"*
- "What should you do if...?"*

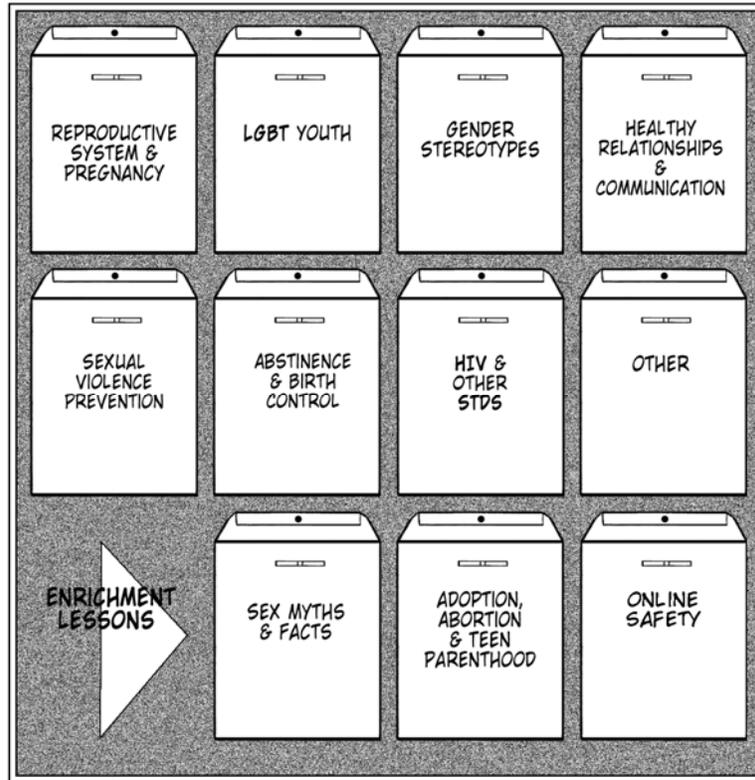
If a student or students say that they have no questions, tell them to write one fact or opinion about a topic in the syllabus. That way everyone is writing something.

Option 2: One anonymous question envelope or box per lesson topic, which would include any enrichment lessons that you are planning to teach

You will have prepared, in advance, up to eleven large manila envelopes (and optionally, a bulletin board), labeled as below.

Show the class these envelopes and give each student several small pieces of scrap paper. You may want to use a different color of scrap paper for each class' questions (1st period - yellow; 2nd period – green, etc.). Ask students to write at least one question and drop it in the appropriate envelope. Explain that they should not write their names on the paper, unless they would prefer to talk with you privately about their question. Have them write only

one question per paper (to facilitate your sorting the questions into logical order, later), but give them as many pieces as they need.



If people are unsure about which envelope is appropriate for a particular question, they can use their judgment and you can rearrange them later. If they express concern that others might see where they put a question, they can use the envelope marked “other.”.

As above, explain when you will answer their questions and write sentence stems on the board to make it easier for them to think of questions.

8. Introduce and assign individual research projects.

Explain that this is a valuable research project that allows students to practice using community resources. There are only 13 topics; you will assign teams of two or three students per topic.

Begin by discussing the concept of **FLASH** research projects. Hand out and read aloud the *Research Project Oral Report Instructions* (or your own revised version; some teachers, for example, prefer not to grade oral and written communication skills in a Health class). A *Research Project Grading Form* will be provided in Lesson 14, for your use when the students present their research projects.

Write up the list of research paper topics in the front of the room. You can also use the visual provided on page 13 of this lesson and online as a PowerPoint slide: www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH. On the same page of their journaling activity, have the students pick the top three topics they are interested in, numbering them one to three (one

being their top pick). Let them know that you will assign one of these three topics to them for the research project. This allows you to diversify the topics.

On pages 15-19 of this lesson plan, you will find *Research Project Assignment Sheets* with the individual research topics and the questions that go along with these topics. You can cut these papers into strips and give each student the topic that matches their assignment.

The topics that are enrichment lessons are on a separate sheet. This was provided to eliminate any confusion. However, they are included in the list of project titles on the handout entitled, *Research Project Topics*. Please edit this handout accordingly to fit your **FLASH** unit.

9. Introduce **FLASH** homework.

Explain the other homework assignments, over and above the Research Project Reports. Make clear that:

- **Family Homework is really an important component of the unit.**
- Students may choose **any trusted adult** to do these assignments with – a parent, aunt, uncle, grandparent, a parent’s partner, group home parent, best friend’s parent.
- The Family Homework assignments are available in **English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese** and **Arabic**. If the adult with whom they want to work would prefer an assignment in one of those languages, the student may download them (if they have computer access) or let you know so that you can do so. (www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH -- click on “Parents and Guardians”).
- You understand that some families talk already about these issues and others never do. You realize that **different cultures and religions have different perspectives** on what conversations are appropriate between generations. But you want to **encourage students to try** these assignments even if they feel awkward at first. They will get easier with practice.
- That said, **you will always give students two options** when you assign homework: a *Family Homework Exercise* and an *Individual Homework Exercise*, in case it is really impossible to find time with a trusted adult, or if the student or family strongly prefers not to do that particular Family Homework assignment. The student will be able to earn the same credit through the *Individual Homework Exercise*. You don’t want to penalize people who don’t have an adult with whom they are close enough, or one with the time or ability to help out. You especially don’t want to penalize people for whom a particular topic is just very sensitive.
- Each *Homework Exercise* should take about **ten minutes**.
- You will try to allow **enough time before the assignment is due** to accommodate busy families.

There is no homework assigned to this lesson other than beginning the research projects. But if you prefer to hand out the whole Family Homework packet at the beginning of the unit, now is the time to do so. If not, send home just the letter entitled, *To Parents and Guardians: Introducing **FLASH** Family Homework*.

Research Project Topics

1. Child Sexual Abuse
2. Rape and Sexual Assault
3. Pregnancy Testing
4. Prenatal Development
5. Prescription Birth Control
6. Non-prescription Birth Control
7. Religion and Birth Control
8. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Teen Support
9. Sexually Transmitted Disease Testing and Treatment
10. HIV - Support for People Living with HIV
11. HIV - Testing
12. Pregnancy Options
13. Internet Safety

Research Project Instructions Handout

Each person will do an *individual research project* during this unit.

- Choose your three most interesting topics from the list on the next few pages; I will assign you one of your top three choices.
- Then, choose an agency or clinic that deals with the topic you are assigned and interview someone who works there (in person, if possible).
- Make a three to four minute oral report on the topic and the agency or clinic.
- Turn in a three to four page written report on the topic and the agency or clinic.
- Paper clip or staple a brochure, card, or other evidence of your visit to the report. (If you have to do your interview by phone, do it at least a week in advance so they can mail your evidence before the due date.)

Field Trip Reports will be graded based on the following criteria:

Did the “reporter” answer all the questions they were supposed to address?50 points

Did the “reporter” describe the *experience*? (what it felt like to visit that particular agency -- for example, “They treated me with patience and respect.” or “If I had a problem, I would/wouldn’t go there, because ...”)..... 10 points

Did the “reporter” bring back evidence of the visit? (for example, a brochure, business card, poster, etc.)20 points

In the **oral** report, did the “reporter” speak clearly, loudly, and without having to read the written report word-for-word? Did he or she answer students’ questions? 10 points

Was the **written** report legible and organized? Did the “reporter” use complete sentences? Did he or she punctuate and capitalize correctly?10 points

total possible =
100 points (A+)

NOTE: You may not interview anyone in your own family, even if he or she is a doctor, a minister, etc. This exercise is designed to expand your knowledge of resources in your community.

Research Project Assignment Sheets

Topics and Research Project Sites:

1. "Child Sexual Abuse"

An agency that specializes in child sexual abuse. This could be an agency that provides either treatment or support for survivors, an emergency room center that specializes in child sexual abuse, a program within the police department, etc.

due: _____

2. "Rape and Sexual Assault"

An agency that specializes in sexual assault and rape. This could be an agency that provides treatment or support for survivors, an emergency room center that specializes in sexual assault, a program within the police department, a legal aid agency, an advocacy group, etc.

due: _____

3. "Pregnancy Testing"

Any clinic or physician that provides pregnancy tests. For example, a Public Health clinic, Planned Parenthood, a family doctor, or gynecologist.

due: _____

Questions to Answer:

1. a. Who sexually abuses children? Why?
- b. How can you tell if a child is being sexually abused? How can you help?
- c. If a person was sexually abused as a child, and now is a teen, what advice would you give them?
- d. Could a child or teen get help from this agency? How?

2. a. What is "rape"? What is "sexual assault"?
- b. If a teen girl was raped, could she get help from this agency? What type of services?
- c. If a teen guy was raped, could he get help from this agency? What type of services?
- d. If someone who is either lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender was raped, could they get services here? What type of services?
- e. How could a teen help a friend who was raped?

3. a. What types of services do you offer youth?
- b. Is there a cost?
- c. Is there an age limit? Does a teen need a parent or guardian's permission?
- d. How do teens usually learn about your services?
- e. If someone tests positive, will you provide or refer them for prenatal care, abortion and adoption planning; depending on what they want?

Topics and Research Project Sites:

4. "Prenatal Development"

An agency or clinic that provides education about prenatal health or services for pregnant women to assist with a healthy pregnancy. Examples of these agencies include a local Public Health clinic or WIC (Women, Infant and Children) program, a hospital maternity support department, the March of Dimes, etc.

due: _____

5. "Prescription Birth Control"

A reproductive health clinic (such as a Public Health Family Planning Clinic or a Planned Parenthood clinic), a family doctor or gynecologist, or a community clinic.

due: _____

6. "Non-prescription Birth Control"

A drug store (pharmacy), a family planning clinic (such as a Public Health Family Planning Clinic or a Planned Parenthood), a local non-profit or HIV organization that distributes condoms, etc.

due: _____

Questions to Answer:

4. a. What services do you provide to teens? Adults?
- b. How can this agency help women and couples have healthy pregnancies?
- c. Does a teen need a parent or guardian's permission to access these services?
- d. Is there a cost?
- e. What advice would you give someone who is pregnant about having a healthy pregnancy?

5. a. Who comes to this agency or clinic for birth control?
- b. Is there a cost? An age limit? Does a teen need a parent or guardian's permission?
- c. What can a teen expect to experience in a birth control visit?
- d. Can a teen bring their partner, friend, or a family member?
- e. What kinds of prescription birth control are available at this agency or clinic?

6. a. What kinds of non-prescription birth control are available at this store or clinic? Name a few brands and their prices.
- b. Who comes to this store or clinic for birth control? Mostly guys? Girls? What ages?
- c. Is there a cost? An age limit? Does a teen need a parent or guardian's permission?
- d. Are the birth control methods – condoms, spermicides -- openly displayed or kept behind the counter?

Topics and Research Project Sites:

7. "Religion and Birth Control"

Clergy (priest, minister, rabbi, monk, nun) or other religious leader (Sunday school teacher, Hebrew school teacher, etc.)

due: _____

Choose two religious faiths to study.

Questions to Answer:

7. a. What does this faith or spiritual community teach about birth control? Are all methods acceptable? Are any?
- b. If a single person or unmarried couple came to you (the religious leader) for advice about birth control, what would you say?
- c. What if a married person or couple came to you?
- d. Has the teaching of this religion always been the same, regarding birth control...or has it changed over time?

8. "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Teen Support"

An agency that provides support, groups, housing, counseling, or activities for teens who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and / or transgender.

due: _____

8. a. What type of services do you offer for LGBT youth?
- b. What brings LGBT youth to your agency?
- c. How many LGBT youth do you serve?
- d. What can a teen do to support their LGBT friends?
- e. If a youth is LGB or T, what services are available in the community to support them?

9. "Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD): Testing and Treatment"

An STD clinic or any clinic or physician which tests and treats STDs (for example, a Public Health clinic, Planned Parenthood, a family doctor, gynecologist)

due: _____

9. a. Who comes to this clinic for STD tests or treatment? What ages?
- b. Is there an age limit? Does a teenager need a parent or guardian's permission? Is there a cost?
- c. What happens to a patient during a visit for an STD test?
- d. What information would you most want teens to know about STDs?

Topics and Research Project Sites:

10. "HIV – Support for People Living With HIV"

A local HIV agency that provides services either to prevent the spread of HIV or to provide treatment, care, housing, and/or education to people living with HIV. Or a clinic or doctor who provides HIV testing and counseling.

due: _____

Questions to Answer:

10. a. What services do you provide to teens and young adults?
b. Is there an age limit?
c. Does a teen need a parent or guardian's permission?
d. Is there a cost for your services?
e. What information would you most want teens to know about living with HIV?

11. "HIV - Testing and Treatment"

A clinic that provides HIV testing or any clinic or physician which provides HIV testing and/or treatment for people living with HIV (for example, a Public Health clinic, Planned Parenthood, a family doctor, gynecologist, etc.)

due: _____

11. a. Who comes to this clinic for HIV tests or treatment? What ages?
b. Is there an age limit? Does a teenager need a parent or guardian's permission?
c. Is there a cost?
d. What happens to a patient during a visit for an HIV test?
e. What information would you most want teens to know about HIV?

Enrichment Lesson Topics (Use only the Enrichment topics that you are teaching)

Topics and Research Project Sites:

Questions to Answer:

12. "Pregnancy Options"

An agency that provides one of the following: prenatal care, adoption services or abortion services.

due: _____

12. a. What types of services do you offer youth?
- b. Is there a cost?
- c. Is there an age limit?
- d. Does a teen need a parent or guardian's permission?
- e. How do teens usually learn about your services?

13. "Internet Safety"

A public library's librarian or a local agency or university professor that specializes in internet safety for young people.

due: _____

13. a. What types of services do you offer youth?
- b. What types of services do you offer parents?
- c. Is there a cost for your services?
- d. What can young people do to stay safe online?
- f. If we think that a friend is in trouble, how can we help them?

To Parents & Guardians:

Introducing *FLASH Family Homework*

Dear Families,

We would like to explain the purpose of the *FLASH* Family Homework assignments. Your child's teacher may assign just one or two homework activities or all fourteen. Each one takes about 10 minutes. Your child can do alternative assignments without you, if necessary. But we hope that once you understand why they are included, you will use these Family Homework assignments with your child.

The writers of the *FLASH* program know that the family is the one who teaches children values about sexual health. Sexual health education in school can teach children about their bodies and about preventing pregnancy and diseases. But only families can teach children when and under what circumstances people should begin dating, or how they should treat their dating partner or spouse, or what sorts of behaviors are never okay. Research shows that when families have these discussions it helps children make healthier choices.

Some families are already talking about these things. For other families, it may be more difficult. *FLASH* Family Homework gives you a chance to talk with your child about many topics related to sexual health. It raises topics that might be difficult for you to bring up on your own. It lets you share your thoughts and beliefs with your child. We hope you will take the chance to do this.

Children are surrounded by messages in the media telling them how to behave sexually. For those of you who have moved here from other countries, these messages may be extra-powerful, as your children are learning what it is to be "American." Although the power of the media is huge, we know that family communication is also very powerful. One of the only ways to weaken the power of the media is to speak clearly and directly to your children about what you believe, why you believe it, and what your hopes are for them.

Research shows that when children hear clear expectations from their parents, they are much more likely to follow them. Whether they are boys or girls; masculine, feminine or neither; gay or straight, they all need to know you love them the way they are. The *FLASH* program educates children about sexual health. One of the most important pieces of this education is the learning and support they receive at home. Thank you for taking 10 minutes each night to have these important conversations with your child.

Sincerely,
FLASH Program Authors
Public Health – Seattle & King County